

# Han van der Maas

*"I am a scientist, not a  
business director."*

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Han van der Maas is a Professor of Psychological Methods; Chair of Psychological Methods unit. Former Director of the Research institute of Psychology at the University of Amsterdam; Former Vice dean of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences and former Scientific director of Oefenweb.nl.

Oefenweb was the first valorisation project of van der Maas, which turned him into an academic running a business, since he doesn't see himself as a businessman. Van der Maas wanted to do something useful with this project: good for science and for the society. The commercial value of the project was a consequence of his wish to help students.

# Improving students learning and triangulating society, academia and business

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**Oefenweb.nl – a website with adaptative learning games for kids – was born as a mean to overcome practical barriers that were found during the data collection phase of a research over kids’ learning processes.**

**Running experiments with students during school time proved to be a major hindrance for Han van der Maas and this team. Therefore, the business was created as a solution to overcome a research bottleneck.**

**According to van der Maas, leader of the research, it was always of extreme importance for the success of the project to have in mind that the business was a consequence and that the data collection and the improvement of students learning were the major goals of this valorisation activity.**

He and his team had great support of University of Amsterdam’s UvA Ventures Holding B.V. The holding offered professional support to create the business, invested money in the project, got shares of the business and, according to Van der Maas, they didn’t pressure for profits. UvA’s interests in the project were in great part scientific too.

That Oefenweb would become a profitable company was beyond van der Maas’ expectations. In 2019, Oefenweb.nl was sold to a big educational group and it continues expanding its activities. “I always hoped for a business that was healthy, with no loss, but I didn’t expect commercial success, much less a profitable project”. Most of all, van der Maas wanted to have a scientific and social impact and the results of the project surpassed his expectations. The project was able to improve the students’ learning rates and Oefenweb.nl is now used by 2000 schools and it has ~200.000 active users.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

## & ADVICE

**Valorisation activities must be useful** to society, good for science and economically healthy.

**The novelty and the adventure dissipates**, the real business routine takes place, so be surrounded by partners that motivate you.

**Valorisation is very diverse** and goes beyond the business format. And a business is much more than just economic results.

“Success is to be able to do something good for the society. Business is just one of the formats for that, a mean to achieve a social goal.”